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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS FROM NURSES IN SERVICE

I.

Dear Editor: I wonder if you would be interested to publish in the JOURNAL the inclosed copy of a letter that General Pershing wrote to Maud McCarhty, who is the Matron-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Forces under whom so many of our American Army nurses served. As there were more than 700 American nurses in the British E. F., either with the six first American Base Hospitals or else as casualls in British hospitals, I am taking this method of bringing to their attention General Pershing's appreciation of her care and interest in them. Miss McCarthy wrote me that she was greatly pleased to receive that letter and in a very gracious way turned the compliment from herself by saying, "I am so glad that the excellent work of the American nurses with the British was brought to the attention of your Commander-in-Chief." Miss McCarthy's interest in every detail of the welfare of the American nurses who were under her charge was so great and so unceasing, I am sure they will all be glad to know that General Pershing sent her this letter of appreciation. Incidentally your readers may be glad to know that the British Government conferred 52 Royal Red Crosses of the first and second class upon American nurses who were with the British E. F. All the Chief Nurses received one of the first class and other nurses who had exceptional responsibility and had done particularly good work.

JULIA C. STIMSON,
Director, Nursing Service, A. E. F.

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
Office of the Commander-in-Chief.

France, April 25, 1919.

My dear Matron:

Now that active operations are at an end and the American nurses on duty with the British Expeditionary Forces are being returned to their homes, I desire to express my personal appreciation and thanks, and—in the name of American womanhood—that of the U. S. Army Nurse Corps to you for the kindly interest and solicitude you so uniformly displayed in their welfare and comfort while attached to your forces.

I am confident that your energetic efforts to promote their contentment were largely responsible for such measure of success as they have achieved in their mission of mercy among you.

To me it was always a source of keen gratification to hear of the efficiency and high ideals with which they carried on their work under your supervision.

I want you to know that they, fully as much as I, appreciate the efforts you have put forth in their behalf.

I regret that an opportunity has not offered to thank you in person for your many acts of kindness to these American women committed to your administrative care and guidance while fulfilling the duties that brought them overseas.

Believe me, my dear Matron,

Very sincerely,

JOHN J. PERSHING.

To Matron-in-Chief, Dame E. Maud McCarthy, G.O.B.E.,
British Expeditionary Forces, France.

II.

Dear Editor: There is a matter that I think ought to be called to the notice of your readers. It came to my attention so universally that nurses did not understand the reason for the existence of the frequently seen prophylactic stations in the Army, I felt that an authoritative statement should be made which shows just how the establishment of such stations fitted in to the general campaign against venereal diseases. As so many nurses have returned to the States, it occurred to me that they could best get the information that this statement contains if it were published in the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING, and I am therefore inclosing a copy to you to ask if you will include it in your next number.

JULIA C. STIMSON,
Director, Nursing Service, A. E. F.

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

April 29, 1919.

The Chief Surgeon has prepared the following statement, by request:

"Nurses have asked the questions: Why do prophylactic stations exist? and are they designed to lessen the moral restraint upon men or to authorize promiscuity? These questions evidence an ignorance of a vital and public question on which every woman, and especially every nurse, has a right and a duty to be informed. To answer them and clear up further doubts the following information is set forth. Venereal diseases in their large aspect are due to illicit sexual intercourse, being so passed from man to woman and woman to man. They cause a vast amount of disability, even among innocent women to whom they are transferred, often ignorantly, in wedlock, and to children. One of them, gonorrhea, may be acquired during birth; another, syphilis, is transmissible to the child in the womb. The duty of preventing them is urgent and of paramount importance, and has been so recognized by the War Department, and a vigorous campaign for that purpose has been waged since we entered the war. This campaign embraces the following main lines of endeavor, given in the order of their relative importance: 1. Education of all soldiers as to the possibility of necessity for continence, the nature and harm resulting from venereal diseases, the moral, mental, economic and patriotic aspects of their prevention. 2. A consistent, systematized, studied and effective campaign against drink and prostitution. 3. Frequent inspection of all men for venereal disease and prompt and effective treatment of those having it. 4. The provision of prophylactic stations (places of disinfection) for men who by reason of weakness or folly have exposed themselves to venereal disease. 5. Deprivation of pay, and trial by courtmartial, for men who acquire venereal disease, and additional trial and punishment of men who neglected prophylactic measures after exposure. From the above, it is seen that prophylaxis is not meant to lower standards, to make illicit indulgence easy, or to sanction it in any way. It is thought important that all nurses should know these facts."

III.

Dear Editor: After reading an article in the May number of the JOURNAL, which appeals to nurses to assist in the work of reconstruction, I have felt it was time to let the nursing world know why the majority of nurses in the A. E. F. wish to get out of the service as soon as possible after their return. At the present time we have about one hundred and seventy nurses and forty patients at Base 69. All the nurses are made very unhappy by the restrictions placed upon us by our chief nurse. The rules, which multiply each day, read

as follows: 1. Nurses must wear prescribed uniforms to dances. 2. Nurses must not leave the immediate base except in full street uniform, which means that we dare not leave the buildings of Base 69. 3. Nurses must wear full street uniform to base ball games held in an adjoining field, also when walking in surrounding fields. 4. Nurses must have typewritten pass to leave Hospital Center, or to go out with gentleman escort. 5. Absolutely no food to be taken from mess hall. We have only one uniform and find it very hard to get another. It is impossible to be presentable on special occasions, as this uniform shows service and every-day wear. Nurses are not placed on their honor, but are treated as questionable characters and are subjected to the humiliation of being watched by nurses on duty in each barrack as military police, who report any infringement of these rules. All privileges for an indefinite length of time, and leave of absence which is granted every four months, are taken away for a slight offense, such as returning three-quarters of an hour late at night, or wearing a white uniform to a dance. After serving a year of active service in the A. E. F., with a clean record, does this not seem enough to make nurses more than anxious to terminate their army career?

Savenay, France

E. V. C.

IV.

Dear Editor: I am very much interested in your comments on Rank for Nurses. In the May issue of the JOURNAL we read of the indifference of the older Army nurses. Not having been associated with the older nurses for the past two years, I am led to believe that their views on this subject have changed since the war, for one of my earliest recollections of Army life is their earnest discussions on the need of rank. Personally the experience of the past two years with its many responsibilities and lack of support has strengthened my belief that the day is not far off when Army nurses will be given their rightful and well earned place. You are correct in your statement that their status depends upon the individual commanding officer, otherwise we would not have one commanding officer forbidding his officers to associate with the nurses and another forbidding the nurses to associate with the enlisted men. Let me relate an incident that took place at one of our base ports in France. One rainy morning the nurses wearing their heavy trench coats assembled in the mess hall; my assistant, a devoted and untiring nurse, found herself assigned to an end seat on a bench which under ordinary conditions would seat four comfortably but the wearing of the trench coats made it almost impossible to crowd four into the allotted space. Being very uncomfortable this nurse left her seat and took a seat at a vacant table directly behind. The soldier assigned to wait upon us ordered her back to her former place. She explained that it was very uncomfortable and refused to leave her seat. The soldier then took the food from the table and directed the nurses then entering the dining-room to another table. For two days this nurse lived on crackers and sweets obtained from the canteen and fearing she would become ill I insisted that she go to the dining-room for her meals. Before returning she reported the matter to the chief nurse. The chief nurse made a visit to the dining-room and upon questioning one of the men as to why the nurses were kept standing in line so long he took her by the shoulders and pushed her from the room. When questioned by the commanding officer, this man's only excuse was that he thought she was a casual and did not know she was the chief nurse. Could this have happened in the case of an officer? How much longer will the Army nurses submit to such indignities? Wake up you older members of the Corps and let us know your true feeling on this subject.

"AN OLD ARMY NURSE."